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01 February 2013

Version of attached file:

Published Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Stapleton, Julia (1994) 'Englishness and the study of politics : the social and political thought of Ernest Barker.', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ideas in context., 32

Further information on publisher's website:

<http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item1115783>

Publisher's copyright statement:

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Additional information:

Sample chapter deposited. Chapter 1: 'Identity, Idealism, and Whiggism : the making of an English political scientist', pp. 20-42.

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CHAPTER I

Lancashire, Idealism, and Whiggism: the making of an English political scientist

HOME AND SCHOOL

The frustrated ambition of working-class scholars at the end of the nineteenth century is well captured in the hero of Hardy's novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Having immersed himself in centuries of learning during every spare moment for well over ten years, Jude Fawley's dreams of formal study were brutally shattered by the Masters' indifference at the hallowed Colleges of 'Christminster' – Oxford in thin disguise. The lowest rungs of the 'ladder of opportunity' for which Jude yearned were not installed until 1902 when the Balfour Education Act laid the foundations of public secondary education in Britain. However, it was not entirely unknown for boys of poor birth to satisfy keen intellectual aspirations before the passage of that Act. A number of factors helped to smooth the path to academic distinction from the most unlikely backgrounds. These included various scholarship schemes, luck, generous benefactors, good voluntary educational institutions in the locality, and the invaluable Cassell's *National Library of Classical Literature*.

For example, Barker's friend and fellow-Mancunian, George Unwin, enjoyed many of these 'advantages' in an environment where public educational provision was meagre. The son of a publican turned shopkeeper, he left school at the age of thirteen to become a clerk in a Stockport hat-making firm. But he soon developed a wide knowledge of philosophy and literature, chiefly through the stimulus of the Stockport literary society, the local Mechanics Institute, and the Unitarian Church. This won him places at Cardiff and Oxford Universities, from where he went on to become an eminent economic historian.¹

¹ G. Unwin, *Studies in Economic History: The Collected Papers of George Unwin*, ed. R.H. Tawney (London, 1927), xi–xii.

Unwin was exceptional in winning university scholarships without previously attaining a bursary for secondary education. Barker's experience of gaining scholarships from a much earlier age – in his case, the age of twelve – was more common among the university entrants of his generation who came from humble origins. Yet the element of chance was as important in his intellectual good fortune as it was for Unwin. The headmaster of his village school at Bredbury on the Cheshire border with Lancashire was requested to prepare the son of a local businessman for the scholarship examination to Manchester Grammar School. In this unprecedented exercise in the village, Barker was recruited as a 'pace-maker'. He had already developed a large appetite for books which he borrowed from neighbours who looked kindly upon him or from the school itself. As a result, he far outdistanced what he liked to regard – with characteristic modesty – as 'the real candidate', and he joined the Grammar School in 1886.² From a small, overcrowded cottage on his grandparents' farm on the lower slopes of Werneth Low, where he was born in 1874, he began a course of upward social mobility that led him to the heart of the British Establishment.³

As will become apparent at several points in this study, Barker himself saw nothing exceptional in his success. He would certainly have disliked any comparison between his own circumstances and those of Jude Fawley, finding the latter 'too pathetic to be true to life'. In any case, he believed that there was no reason at the turn of the century for 'a man who was hungry for knowledge to go unregarded about the Oxford streets': a Non-Collegiate Body and the Delegacy 'for the extension of teaching beyond the limits of the University' existed to prevent such pitiful spectres.⁴ Still, fate had been as kind to him as it had been cruel to Jude, and his fundamental attitudes and outlook were shaped accordingly. In particular, conscious that he owed his whole career to scholarships of one kind or another, he became a firm advocate of that route to higher education from less prosperous homes, rather than a system of loans or concurrent employment.⁵

² E. Barker, *Age and Youth: Memories of Three Universities and Father of the Man* (London, 1953), 253–5.

³ In his usual upbeat way, he liked to think that the 'stars had been auspicious in the year of my birth', sharing it – as he did – with G.K. Chesterton, Geoffrey Dawson (editor of *The Times*), Chaim Weizmann, Winston Churchill, James Mallon (Warden of Toynbee Hall) and Lord Sandwich. Barker to M.B. Reckitt, 17 December 1953, Reckitt Papers, University of Sussex Library, 13/1. ⁴ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 71.

⁵ E. Barker, *British Universities* (London, 1946), 21.

The place at Manchester Grammar School released Barker from the career as a schoolmaster at an elementary school which had previously been appointed for him; but it by no means cleared away all the financial and psychological obstacles he faced in his drive to become a scholar. He relied heavily upon winning prizes to overcome the resistance of the male members of his extended family who disdained his non-remunerative existence in the world of books. Through these achievements, he also contributed to the incidental expenses he incurred in school attendance which the stretched resources of his home could not meet.⁶ Further encouragement came in the form of supplementary coaching and the loan of books from some of the masters. Such supports enabled his education to reach a point at which it acquired discipline and direction. He eventually specialised in classics, particularly Greek, laying the foundation of his lifelong admiration for the ancient world. As he emphasised in his autobiography, it was from a love of the classics that all his other intellectual interests stemmed, including the subject in which he was later to hold a chair.⁷ Henceforth, Greek political thought and institutions, in particular, became the cardinal reference-point for his understanding of political science.

The best of classical educations was not the only factor in Barker's early life in Lancashire which concentrated his mind on politics and political science; the *Manchester Guardian* came a close second. As he reflected in 1931, this newspaper was one of two things about Manchester – the other being the Grammar School – which he would never forget: 'I remember buying it and reading it when I was a boy. I read it with more understanding as I grew up; and from it, perhaps, I learned such lessons of political wisdom as I have mastered, and acquired the tastes that have since conducted me to a Chair of Politics.'⁸ An equally important stimulus to his political interests – and along the same lines as the *Manchester Guardian* – was his father. While his relationship with George Barker – a miner-cum-'general handyman' – seems to have been a distant one, he readily imbibed his Liberal politics. Gladstone, in particular, won his father's praise, and Ernest Barker followed suit. Gladstone's personality, he recalled on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the elder statesman in 1948, 'coloured and even controlled' his memories of boyhood and youth.⁹ Many of the political ideals and causes which Barker later embraced

⁶ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 258, 270. ⁷ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 262–3, n.1.

⁸ 'When I was in Manchester', *The Times*, 31 December 1931.

⁹ E. Barker, 'Mr. Gladstone', *The British Weekly*, 20 May 1948, 7.

were leaves from Gladstone's book, though they were not exclusive to the latter. These included democracy, Home Rule, sound public finance, national self-determination, and the primacy of morality in the conduct of political affairs. An aspect of Gladstone's persona which Barker was in a better position than his father to appreciate was the figure he cut as a 'scholar-statesman', and a classical scholar at that. This, combined with Gladstone's great powers of oratory, reminded Barker of Pericles. It was a satisfying contemplation for a fellow 'Greats' graduate from Lancashire. Most of all, however, Barker's Gladstonian roots shaped his keen sensitivity to the importance of individual liberty and the incursions which state and society could often make upon it.

Such an attitude was reinforced by his character as well as by filial loyalty. For example, he recalled in his autobiography his antipathy as a boy towards organised games. He sought an outlet for his cricketing instincts at home with his seven brothers and sisters (of whom he was the eldest) rather than teams at school. Long, solitary walks under the inspiration of Wordsworth were another of his preferred forms of exercise. Indeed, he openly confessed to a certain 'awkwardness' in company, the result of a 'home-keeping' temper and the rural setting in which he grew up. His studies seem to have provided all the stimulation he needed during his youth: 'Outside the cottage', he declared, 'I had nothing but school; but having my school, I had everything'.¹⁰

It was not that he was embarrassed by his early environment; or at least, if he was, he realised the foolishness of his attempts to conceal the modesty of his home from his more affluent contemporaries.¹¹ Later in life, at any rate, he frequently counted its blessings and extolled them against pessimistic accounts of working-class life in the era of modern capitalism. In 1934, for example, he wrote to thank J.L. Hammond for his latest book – written with Barbara Hammond – entitled *The Bleak Age*. This argued that the material advantages which the working class enjoyed in industrial civilisation were greatly outweighed by a new poverty of spirit. Barker strongly resisted this conclusion, suggesting that all was not gloom in the poorer quarters of nineteenth-century towns and villages.

¹⁰ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 292. I was alerted to this passage by Michael Oakeshott's *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education*, ed. Timothy Fuller (Yale, 1989), 40. Oakeshott uses it to exemplify a concept of education – now rapidly fading – in which school is the centre of a boundless imaginative universe. ¹¹ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 269.

I was born sixty years ago in a little cottage, with one of the two rooms on the ground having a stone floor, and the other nothing but plain . . . earth. I suppose it was bleak; and yet all the memories that survive in my mind about it are curiously warm and kind. My father played his old violin, and sometimes sang; we grew up among chequered joys and troubles. I used to hear from my great grandfather, who survived till I was 12 or more, tales of an earlier day. There were bleak things in those tales; but there were also things (like stories of fast trips at over 4 miles an hour in a 'packet' on the canal) that used to please me.¹²

Nevertheless, both the relative isolation and simplicity of his boyhood surroundings enhanced his diffident tendency, setting limits to his identification with the many organisations he subsequently joined. While fully appreciating the importance of society to human fulfilment, he was careful not to over-expose himself to it. As he wrote in his autobiography: 'Whenever I have belonged to a group, and have found the group cultivating and expecting the quality called *esprit de corps*, I have instinctively shied at the expectation. Institutionalism has seemed to me a sort of infectious disease, which I have been anxious not to catch.'¹³

This aversion informed Barker's social and political theory at every point. The great store which he set by privacy is nicely caught in a book which he wrote in 1939. There he urged recognition of the 'duty of solitude' as 'the ultimate duty which a man owes to himself, to others through himself, and to the self which is behind himself and all other selves'. The duty of solitude ranked higher even than responsibility to one's family, neighbour, and the state.¹⁴ He paid homage to the Puritans for this insight, a sympathy which arose from the Nonconformist faith in which he had been brought up. As we shall see, it was not the only grounds on which he upheld their legacy.

LATE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY INDIVIDUALISM

The ambivalence which Barker felt towards society, the state, and voluntary groups was by no means unique among political thinkers during his intellectually formative years. In part the product of his character and background, it was also a response to the vulnerability of liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century. Influenced by the

¹² Barker to J.L. Hammond, 6 October 1934, MS. Hammond 18, fol. 225, Bodleian Library.

¹³ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 304.

¹⁴ E. Barker, *The Values of Life: Essays on the Circles and Centres of Duty* (London, 1939), 108-9.

growing demand for legislation in the economic and social realms, concerted attempts were made in many intellectual camps to close the gap between the individual and society which that ideology was alleged to have opened up. This task seemed the more urgent in the eyes of contemporaries as the extension of the state now went beyond the economic infrastructure of 'telegraphy, insurance, annuities, postal order, and parcel post'. Of far deeper import for G.J. Goschen – writing in 1883 – was 'the growing interference with the relations between classes, its increased control over vast categories of transactions between individuals and the substitution in many dealings of trade and manufacture, of the aggregate conscience and moral sense of the nation, for the conscience and moral sense of men as units'.¹⁵

A common justification of this new type of state action was that – in the words of the Idealist philosopher Bernard Bosanquet – 'society is the moral essence of the individual'.¹⁶ But rarely was a philosophical and political synthesis achieved without reservation and equivocation. This was largely due to the long shadow cast over English political thought at the turn of the century by the tenacious belief of an earlier generation in the primacy and importance of individual moral agency. That conviction – it is becoming increasingly clear – rarely condoned unrestrained egoism on the basis of an atomistic conception of society.¹⁷ This was often obscured in early-twentieth-century endeavours to discredit the 'abstract individualism' imputed to 'classical' Liberalism in order to give the collectivist state a clear run. In effect, however, the continuing resonance of the Victorian language of character – one which was by no means oblivious to a wider public good – limited the purchase of holistic concepts of society in the collectivist enthusiasm of the time. In this sense, it is more correct to speak of the re-orientation of individualism as a perspective on society, morality, and politics at the turn of the century, rather than its displacement. In general, society continued to be regarded as

¹⁵ G.J. Goschen, *Laissez-Faire and Government Interference* (London, 1883), 3–4; quoted in W.H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Collectivism* (London, 1983), 30.

¹⁶ B. Bosanquet, 'The antithesis between individualism and socialism philosophically considered' (1890), in *The Civilization of Christendom and Other Studies* (London, 1893), 308.

¹⁷ For this revisionist view of Victorian 'individualism' as associated with the concepts of character, moral strenuousness, and even altruism rather than economic selfishness, see Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930* (Oxford, 1991); on the wide range of attitudes towards the relationship of individuals to society and the state in 'old liberalism' see A. Vincent, 'Classical liberalism and its crisis of identity', *History of Political Thought*, II (Spring 1990), 143–61.

a function of individuals, albeit individuals who impacted strongly on one another, who were imbued with a sense of mutual obligation, and achieved some kind of common identity. The changed tone of this individualism consisted mainly of the elevation of the state as a key variable in both individual character and social cohesion, a development which owed much to the prominent place which poverty occupied in the late-Victorian 'moral imagination'.¹⁸

The strength of 'moral individualism' across a wide spectrum of nineteenth-century political thought is best appreciated by examining the two chief influences in Barker's education after he left Manchester Grammar School in 1893: Idealist philosophy and Burkean political ideas. Despite their very different lineage and language, the two streams of thought shared the same double-faced nature. On the one hand, exponents of both underlined individual liberty and spontaneity as the cardinal political values; but on the other, they stressed that these priorities were dependent upon a wider, group freedom identified primarily with the nation. Barker encountered Idealism and Burkeanism in the Literae Humaniores and Modern History Schools at Oxford respectively, after winning a scholarship to Balliol College. He declared his allegiance to Idealism in his earliest work, and also singled out in his autobiography a number of Idealist thinkers who had particularly impressed him as an undergraduate. By contrast, it was not until later that he explicitly identified with the Whig historiography which formed the main vehicle of Burkean thought in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Consequently, in the following account, the influence of Idealism will be more apparent. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the next chapter, his first publications were steeped in Whig assumptions and values, albeit unacknowledged and largely unattributable to specific individuals within that tradition.

LITERAE HUMANIORES AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALISM

The idealist revival of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was inextricably linked with the distinction which Literae Humaniores –

¹⁸ G. Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York, 1991).

¹⁹ As J.W. Burrow has remarked, 'it is in historiography rather than in theoretical statement that we find the fullest expressions of Burkean political ideas in nineteenth-century England'. *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge, 1981), 131.

or 'Greats' – achieved in this period.²⁰ First expounded in the lectures of T.H. Green and the writings of F.H. Bradley, British Idealism gave purpose and intellectual coherence to Oxford's most prestigious and exacting School. In turn, its further development was directed by this association. There were a number of reasons for the closely intertwined fortunes of Idealism and Greats in the heyday of the latter. First, the dominance of Plato and Aristotle in the Greats curriculum gave Idealism a more secure and lasting hold at Oxford than it ever achieved at Cambridge in the equivalent Moral Sciences Tripos.²¹ Second, the high premium which Idealist thinkers since Hegel attached to the state reinforced the ethic of public service which Oxford – particularly *Literae Humaniores* – now inculcated.²² Third, Idealism located the roots of contemporary institutions and thought in antiquity, tracing a developing sense of human solidarity back to the Greeks, especially. It thus underlined the contemporary relevance of classical literature and history as the basis for understanding the ideas and institutions of the modern world.

The central Idealist belief in a sense of 'the common good' as the foundation of society was part of the late-Victorian reaction against perceptions of the atomistic individualism in nineteenth-century political thought mentioned above, and identified mainly with Utilitarianism.²³ It both reflected and reinforced the growing movement towards social reform and democracy as English society seemed to acquire a greater sense of collective national purpose. In attempting to clarify the opportunities and dangers attendant upon these changes, Idealist philosophers and also other classical scholars turned to ancient Greece. They regarded the Greek city-states as a model of society organised around the principles of obligation and citizenship rather than individual rights, from which many modern lessons could be learned. Aristotle's *Ethics*, in particular, became a seminal guide to the increasingly 'civic' nature of English political life, overshadowing if not entirely displacing – its previous association with Christianity.

²⁰ On 'Greats' in its most flourishing period, see R. Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: The Last Lost Cause* (London, 1986). A recent and illuminating work on British Idealism is P.P. Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists: Selected Studies* (Cambridge, 1990). This contains an extensive bibliography of writings both by and on the Idealists.

²¹ P. Robbins, *The British Hegelians, 1875–1925* (New York, 1982), 46.

²² On the transformation of Oxford from a theological seminary to a centre for training political and administrative elites after the reforms of the mid-nineteenth-century, see A.J. Engel, *From Clergyman to Don: The Rise of the Academic Profession in Nineteenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford, 1983). See also Lewis Campbell, *On the Nationalization of the Old Universities* (London, 1901).

²³ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 325.

As F.M. Turner has argued: 'Democracy, empire, military preparedness, international economic rivalry, an expanding bureaucracy, national insurance, school lunches, and national education, to mention only a few political developments, had made citizenship a category of thought and association to which an increasingly large number of values and experiences adhered.'²⁴

As an undergraduate at Balliol College reading Greats, Barker was fully exposed to Idealist thought. He had joined the college in 1893. In that year Edward Caird – an influential Idealist philosopher and friend of Green, although more of an Hegelian – became Master following the death of Benjamin Jowett. Jowett had himself been instrumental in the revival of Idealism in Britain. Idealism had also flourished at the college through Green, who had been a Fellow there before his early death in 1882. At Balliol, Barker enjoyed Caird's counsel in philosophy. Indeed, he so impressed Caird that the latter encouraged him in a rather premature application for the Chair in Philosophy at the University of Glasgow at the outset of his academic career.²⁵ But while, ultimately, Caird failed to turn his charge into a philosopher, he did succeed in imparting a good many of his 'views and . . . idioms'.²⁶ It was probably Caird, along with like-minded tutors such as J.A. Smith, who directed Barker's reading in philosophy towards the Idealists. He certainly absorbed Kant, Hegel, Green, and Bradley in the course of his studies for Greats. Equipped with this Idealist orientation, he developed an interest in the interpretation of political thought, if not in political philosophy itself.

Barker's first book, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, published in 1906, reflected a growing interest among scholars of his generation in the history of political ideas written from an Idealist perspective.²⁷ Its arguments will be examined in the next chapter.

²⁴ F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1981), 358. On the Idealist reading of contemporary anxieties about democracy and collectivism into Greek political thought, see pp. 432–46. Here Turner focuses on the work of R.L. Nettleship, Bernard Bosanquet, and Barker. See also his account of Alfred Zimmern's *The Greek Commonwealth: Politics and Economics in Fifth-Century Athens* (Oxford, 1911), 259–62. This work contained themes which were similar to the Idealist interest in the Greeks.

²⁵ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 194.

²⁶ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 318.

²⁷ The influence of Idealism on the history of philosophy has scarcely been explored. Some moves in this direction in relation to Bosanquet have been made by C. Parker, 'Bernard Bosanquet, historical knowledge, and the history of ideas', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 18 (1988), 213–30. Besides the contributions of Bosanquet and Barker to this area, there are also those of John MacCunn, D.G. Ritchie, and C.E. Vaughan. These were also rooted in Idealist thought. See J. MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers: Bentham, J.S. Mill, Cobden, Carlyle, Mazzini*,

Here, it is appropriate to note the influence of Green on the book, which its author acknowledged at the outset. Claiming to have gained his 'general conception of political science' from Green's *Principles of Political Obligation*, Barker declared: 'it is with his teaching that I have contrasted, or (more often) compared, that of Plato and Aristotle'.²⁸ A eulogy to Green which he made in 1915 reveals the precise attraction which Barker found in his leading Idealist mentor, revealing as much about Barker's conception of and preoccupation with English culture as it does about Green's political philosophy. Green, he wrote, had 'seized the philosophy of Greece and of Germany, and interpreted it for Englishmen with a full measure of English caution, and with a full reference to that deep sense of the "liberty of the subject" and that deep distrust of "reason of state", which marks all Englishmen'. In this way, Green had remained true to the liberal tradition of J.S. Mill. Mill in his turn – according to Barker – was fully alive to the sense which Green later developed of the 'spiritual foundations of society'.²⁹ However, Green had corrected Mill's individualism with a more socialised conception of human action. Green, Barker maintained, had put paid to Mill's flawed idea of 'self-regarding' actions; and he had substituted the truer distinction – for the purpose of defining the scope of the state – between 'outward actions necessary and valuable for the maintenance of rights – actions which the state can secure by external force because they are external and actions proceeding from an inward will'.³⁰

This claim certainly sounded a keynote of Green's political philosophy. For Green, the state had a duty to secure the social conditions in which individuals could exercise the full range of their capacities as freely as possible. In particular, the function of the state was to create a propitious climate for 'the growth of self-reliance, with the formation of a manly conscience and sense of moral dignity, – in short, with the moral autonomy which is the condition of the highest

T.H. Green (London, 1910); D.G. Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference: Four Essays on the Political Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, J.S. Mill, and T.H. Green* (London, 1891); *Natural Rights: A Criticism of Some Political and Ethical Conceptions* (London, 1894); and parts of *Darwin and Hegel, with Other Philosophical Studies* (London, 1893) and *Studies in Political and Social Ethics* (London, 1902); Vaughan's main works were *The Political Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau* (Cambridge, 1915); and *Studies in the History of Political Philosophy Before and After Rousseau*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1925).

²⁸ E. Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (London, 1906), vii.

²⁹ E. Barker, review of J. MacGunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, *International Journal of Ethics*, 20, 2 (1910), 220.

³⁰ E. Barker, *Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day* (London, 1915), 58–9.

goodness'. (It was an ideal of arduous self-development which did indeed have strong echoes of Mill, and which Barker constantly played up in his renditions of Idealism.) But the state could not promote moral goodness directly, Green thought, having defined the latter in terms of voluntary contributions towards 'the common good'; the 'disinterested or unselfish morality' which he exhorted as the object of all human endeavour could not be forced.³¹ He was optimistic that the state's indirect role in promoting this 'true morality' could be realised with only a minor extension of its duties to encompass land reform, elementary education, temperance, and restrictions upon freedom of contract in employment.³²

Green's Idealism was thus quite compatible politically with the 'Manchester' liberalism of Cobden and Bright to which he was consciously indebted. This called for an end to 'abuses' in public life, such as those which were embodied in protectionism and an Established Church. Green worked firmly with this grain of political moralism in mid-Victorian liberalism, if he did not adopt all of its causes. It was one to which Gladstone, especially, had given much practical effect.³³ Indeed, recent historians have stressed that Green's primary contribution to political radicalism was to clothe its underlying moral ethos in philosophical language, his specific policy proposals being ancillary to this end.³⁴ He expanded the horizons of radicalism by – in Melvin Richter's words – 'lead[ing] a reaction against that aspect of [it] which made no demand for a personal contribution to the social good'.³⁵ Yet it is important to recognise that in doing so he introduced a distinct emollient element into English liberalism, as will become clear later in this chapter.

Barker could not fail to have been attracted to Green's theory of the state, given its deep roots in liberal radicalism. He shared the northern, provincial, Nonconformist ambience of that force in mid-nineteenth-century politics. Following Green's lead, though, he dropped the war against 'privilege' which had galvanised it then (not

³¹ T.H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, ed. B. Bosanquet (1895; London, 1931), 39–40.

³² T.H. Green, *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract* (London, 1881).

³³ This connection between the moralism in mid-Victorian liberalism and Gladstone is emphasised by R. Bellamy. 'T.H. Green and the morality of Victorian liberalism', in R. Bellamy (ed.), *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought and Practice* (London, 1990), 132.

³⁴ S. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880–1914* (Cambridge, 1979), 45; and Bellamy, 'T.H. Green and the morality of Victorian liberalism', 132.

³⁵ M. Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T.H. Green and his Age* (London, 1964), 269–70, 291.

least, perhaps, because he found no doors to the political and educational Establishment closed against him).³⁶ Barker's Nonconformism was especially important in drawing him to Green and the political tradition in which he stood, as it was for other second-generation Idealists like A.D. Lindsay.³⁷ Brought up in the Congregationalist faith at the seventeenth-century chapel of Hatherlow in Cheshire, he would have been much moved by the ideal of spontaneous moral community at the heart of Green's political thought.³⁸ It is true that the same Puritan background set limits to his identification with Green's political vision; as we have seen already, Barker flinched from society in excess, both in his personal life and in his tastes in political theory. In this he departed from Green for whom 'ascetic altruism' was the essence of the good life, and for whom – as Alan Milne has remarked – conflict between personal interest and the common good was unimaginable.³⁹ Green's insistence upon the virtue of unremitting self-sacrifice reflected the social gospel of Evangelicalism, a force which had melded with the earlier Nonconformist traditions of his family but which was absent from Barker's religious roots. Still, Green's political prescriptions and his sense of the sanctity of individual personality which underlay them were less demanding than his ethical ones, and clearly harmonised with the religious and ideological temper of Barker's home. Like Green, he inducted Nonconformity to a central place in his political theory, a theme which will become more apparent still when we turn to his role in the Pluralist movement.

Barker was also attracted to the work of two other leading Idealist thinkers in Britain: F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet. These, like Green, offered insights which illuminated his early environment, particularly his sense of its relative 'classlessness'. He was to make much of the latter in his writings on Englishness after the Second World War, arguing vehemently against analyses of 'England' which emphasised its class divisions. Such interpretations were, he believed, products of the southern part of the country, quite alien to those who

³⁶ On Barker's attempt to induct Nonconformism into mainstream Englishness, see ch. 5 below.

³⁷ Lindsay brought out the Puritan basis of Green's political beliefs in his Introduction to the latter's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1895, London, 1941). Lindsay's Idealism is contrasted with Barker's in ch. 6 below.

³⁸ This suggestion has been persuasively advanced by F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 441.

³⁹ Richter, *The Politics of Conscience*, 257; A.J.M. Milne, 'The common good and rights in T.H. Green's ethical and political theory', in A. Vincent (ed.), *The Philosophy of T.H. Green* (Aldershot, 1986), 60.

were accustomed to the 'industrial democracy' of the north.⁴⁰ Green's Idealism was less promising on this score than that of his contemporaries. Green had notoriously raised doubts about the extent to which the gin-drinking denizens of London yards were included within the pale of Victorian society, a concern which was echoed in his comment about the social divisions engendered by the culturally central concept of the 'gentleman'.⁴¹ By contrast, Bosanquet was more sanguine about the homogeneity of English society, expressing ideas with which Barker could readily identify and which were later to inspire his theory of national character. Bosanquet's philosophy, maintained Barker in 1915, represented a 'fuller social experience [than that of Green], the fruit of new social experiments, which suggests that the essentials of character are the same throughout the social whole'.⁴² Bradley's philosophy of 'my station and its duties' could also be invoked in support of an agreeable image of English society, one which was held together by the bonds of mutual occupational service rather than class conflict. This was especially so given that Bradley denied that stations were inexorably 'fixed' at birth,⁴³ his allowance of a degree of occupational mobility according well with Barker's conception of the fluidity of English social structure, to which his own success bore witness. We shall find echoes of these Idealist assumptions and commitments throughout Barker's *oeuvre*, so it is important to be aware at the outset of the strong regional identities which attracted him to them. They were reinforced, however, by the cultural beliefs articulated in Burkean Whiggism.

MODERN HISTORY AND BURKEAN WHIGGISM

After obtaining a First in Greats in 1897 Barker joined the Modern History School at Oxford. His aim in doing so was to prepare himself for the Home Civil Service examination, a demanding exercise which favoured the generalist. In the event, his extra year at Oxford settled his vocation as a scholar rather than an administrator. He had gained Firsts in both Greats and Modern History, and in 1899 he added to these accomplishments a prize fellowship in Classics at Merton College Oxford. The fellowship was to run for seven years. However, the income it generated was not munificent and was certainly

⁴⁰ E. Barker, 'The English people', *Britain Today* (July, 1943), 15-19.

⁴¹ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 31. ⁴² E. Barker, *Political Thought in England*, 72.

⁴³ Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, 40.

inadequate by itself to maintain a married don, which Barker became in the following year. He therefore sought an additional academic position. The first post which fell vacant was a Lectureship in Modern History at Wadham College which he secured in the same year as the Merton fellowship. This appointment marked the beginning of his 21-year association with the Oxford Modern History Faculty, holding associate tutorships at St John's College in 1909 and then New College in 1913. In the words of a contemporary, he proved to be 'one of the most (if not the most) successful history lecturers in the University'.⁴⁴

The ease with which Barker moved between the two subjects is not only a comment on his intellectual versatility; it also reflects the extent to which classics was seen to provide the linchpin of all other areas of the Humanities at this time. This common background created, as Barker himself pointed out in his autobiography, a *lingua franca* which made light of disciplinary boundaries.⁴⁵ In the case of history, the route which Barker and many of his colleagues had taken from Greats created an instant sympathy with the work of the French historian Fustel de Coulanges. As H.A.L. Fisher recalled, 'Fustel had travelled the high road which leads from the ancient to the modern world. It was exactly the route which I proposed to follow.'⁴⁶ In similar words, Barker himself introduced one of his later works.⁴⁷

Throughout the period in which Barker was associated with it, the Oxford Modern History School was intellectually centred in Whig

⁴⁴ W.H. Stevenson to T.F. Tout, 3 December 1908, Tout Papers, The John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 1/1143/4. This – and two other letters between Stevenson and Tout (4 and 7 December 1908) – concerned Barker's application for the tutorship at St John's College in 1908. The correspondence provides a revealing insight into Barker's character and the qualities which well equipped him for a college post. The college would overlook the fact of his being married – and in addition, not baptised – thought Stevenson. More important was his 'brilliant university career'; his 'charmingly frank and often, almost naive, nature that wins most hearts'; his 'wise tolerance of aberrations from the highest standards of religious and social morality . . . both in the eyes of the authorities and of the undergraduates'; and his 'moderate and . . . [un]obtruded' religious and political views. In these respects Stevenson compared Barker with Maurice Powicke, Barker's chief rival for the post, who shared Barker's Nonconformist upbringing and would soon share his married status as well. The implication of Stevenson's letter, however, was that Powicke's views were not as flexible as Barker's. I am much indebted to Peter Slec for drawing these letters to my attention.

⁴⁵ E. Barker, *Age and Youth*, 17.

⁴⁶ H.A.L. Fisher, *An Unfinished Autobiography* (Oxford, 1940), 71.

⁴⁷ E. Barker, *From Alexander to Constantine: Passages and Documents Illustrating the History of Social and Political Ideas, 336 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Oxford, 1956). The aim of the book, he declared, was to 'build a bridge – or rather lay stepping-stones . . . – across the six centuries of time between the emergence of the hellenistic world of great states and solemn kings and the appearance of that Christian world of Church and State in which we still live and have our being'. Preface.

historiography. The Whig interpretation of English history had increasingly lost its sectarian edge in the nineteenth century, becoming – instead – the ‘national’ interpretation of the English past.⁴⁸ Initially focusing upon the Whig settlement of 1688 but later extending back to the early Middle Ages and the Teutonic invasions, nineteenth-century Whiggism told a story of national unification which successfully transcended class, racial, and linguistic barriers; of the uniqueness of the English political system with its fine balance of local and central forces; of the successful brokerage of ‘progress’ and ‘tradition’; and of the gradual securing of English constitutional liberty and representative institutions.⁴⁹ Whiggism maintained a particularly powerful presence at Oxford in the second half of the nineteenth century due to the influence of William Stubbs, Regius Professor from 1867 to 1884.⁵⁰ Stubbs’ *Select Charters and other Illustrations of English Constitutional History* (1870) and his three-volume *Constitutional History of England* (1874–8) supplied to the Modern History School what the works of Plato and Aristotle gave to Greats: that is, authoritative texts which set the intellectual tone of the School as a whole. In the 1880s, Stubbs’ works were accompanied by J.R. Green’s *Short History of the English People* (1874) on the School’s syllabus.⁵¹ This addition strengthened the hold of Whiggism on the study of history at Oxford, carrying its characteristic themes of English liberty and continuity into the realm of social history.

Two other historians also came to share Stubbs’ influence on the study of history at Oxford: Paul Vinogradoff and F.W. Maitland.⁵² These figures represented a new wave of ‘professional’ historians who consciously distanced themselves from the ‘literary’, narrative style of historical study which Whiggism was important in sustaining in the nineteenth century. They revered Stubbs because he did much to break this ‘amateur’ mould through the high premium he set upon the use of original documents. It is true that they rejected Stubbs’ ‘presentist’ view of the English past, a characteristic feature of the Whig approach which perceived in historical events a steady upward

⁴⁸ Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, 295.

⁴⁹ I have only attempted to identify nineteenth-century Whiggism in its broadest outlines here. On the nuances of this genre, see Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*.

⁵⁰ According to J.P. Kenyon, Stubbs ‘moulded the greater part of the Oxford history syllabus, almost single-handed, into the form it retained until the 1960s’. *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Renaissance* (London, 1983), 169.

⁵¹ Kenyon, *The History Men*, 164.

⁵² The precise nature of their influence will be examined in ch. 2 below.

progression towards the existing political order.⁵³ It was on this account that their work on medieval history seemed more credible than that of Stubbs to a younger generation of historians anxious to cultivate 'impartiality' as a critical mark of scholarship. In 1936, for example, Barker praised Maitland for interpreting 'the manor, and feudalism, and the Middle Ages in general, intrinsically and by their own light . . . This, to my mind, is the difference between Maitland and Stubbs. Great as Stubbs was, he wrote his *Constitutional History of England* in spectacles – the spectacles of Victorian Liberalism.'⁵⁴ Yet, while eschewing anachronism in historiography, the new 'professional' historians clung to the notion that history was a discipline of profound moral and political significance. Moreover, many continued the reverence for English political institutions which had been a cardinal attribute of Whiggism, whether in its 'amateur' or 'professional' guise. Again, while determined to overcome the insularity of the Whig tradition, a new generation of historians – Acton, Bury, and Maitland, for example – nevertheless brought to the study of West European and American history the same preoccupation with the development of political and intellectual liberty which English history had inspired in their Whig predecessors.⁵⁵ Finally, the transition to 'professionalism' in English historiography left virtually intact the nineteenth-century belief – rooted in the combined forces of Liberal Anglicanism and romantic nationalism – that 'national character' constituted the moving force in history.⁵⁶ Barker's work as an historian and political scientist was to reflect all these changes and continuities in Whiggism at the turn of the century.

⁵³ On the reaction against Whiggism at the turn of the century see P.B.M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and Constitutional Development in Whig Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction between 1890 and 1930* (The Hague, 1978). For a stimulating and persuasive attempt to go beyond the amateur/professional dichotomy in characterising the transition in English historiography at the turn of the century to a recognition of the many different forms which professionalism took, see J.W. Burrow, 'Victorian historians and the Royal Historical Society', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 39 (1989), 125–40.

⁵⁴ E. Barker, 'Maitland as a sociologist', *The Sociological Review*, 29 (1937), 123.

⁵⁵ R. Jann, *The Art and Science of Victorian History* (Columbus, Ohio, 1985), 228.

⁵⁶ C. Parker, *The English Historical Tradition since 1850* (Edinburgh, 1990), 12 and 41; J.R. Green's organic understanding of the English nation is discussed in Jann, *The Art and Science of Victorian History*, 145–7. On Maitland's evident continuity with this tradition of attributing generic characteristics to the English nation, see ch. 3 below. The nation as a collective subject had not always featured so strongly in Whiggism as it did from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. The focus of the Whiggism of the early nineteenth century, as typified by Macaulay, was more personal and heroic. See Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, 104–6.

THE UNITY OF BARKER'S EDUCATION

For all their differences of subject-matter and intellectual orientation, there were several cross-currents between the historiography and the philosophy which Barker encountered at Oxford and which underpinned his subsequent adherence to both. Not least important, in Whiggism and Idealism alike much emphasis was placed on the cohesiveness of English society, a quality which was attributed to an homogenous English character as most powerfully expressed (J.R. Green aside) in the nation's political life. The importance of the concept of national character in Idealist thought – as well as in Whiggism – is evident in Bosanquet's praise of Vico and Montesquieu; they had laid the foundations of Idealism by recognising 'the fundamental unity of a national civilisation'. As a consequence, 'national mind and character [had taken] its unquestioned place in modern social theory'.⁵⁷

It is true that, as Christopher Parker has pointed out, the Whig understanding of national character was permeated with 'nominalist' assumptions. He maintains that 'the strength of the English myth, the matter of England, was that, however paradoxically, it embraced the concept of individualism'. That is, for English historians towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was individual Englishmen rather than a transcendent 'national person' who achieved and sustained the institutions (and more importantly, the Constitution) embodying the nation's capacity for freedom.⁵⁸ The full-blown kind of organicist thinking which subordinated parts to the whole manifestly failed to penetrate English historiography, a barrier which it was to encounter in Barker's political thought as well.⁵⁹ Idealism, of course, existed to combat all individualist heresies, its protagonists emphasising the conceptual priority of society over the individual. Nevertheless, none of the English Idealists attributed an independent existence to society, nor to the state for that matter. Even Bosanquet, who is often regarded as lacking Green's reserve by attributing reality to the

⁵⁷ B. Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (London, 1899, repr. 1965), 39.

⁵⁸ Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, 45.

⁵⁹ For example, using the term 'nominalism' in the opposite of Parker's sense that names are pure fictions, Barker denounced in 1937 'the nominalistic ideology' of the times. By this he meant the same false conception that only names exist, and that the individuals behind the 'labels' are insignificant, to which Parker regards the nineteenth-century historical tradition in England as similarly adverse. His attack was all of a piece with his unease at the power and divisiveness of groups in modern society. He wrote that '[one] creates a noun of assemblage: one worships that noun, and hates another noun of the same type.' *The Values of Life*, 45–6.

General Will of society, emphasised that the latter existed *only* through the minds of its members.⁶⁰ The distance, then, between Idealism and Whiggism was limited, and less important than their shared philosophical and cultural perspectives.

To explore this common ground further, there is an obvious Burkean backdrop to the Idealism of both Green and Bosanquet. Thus, Green rivalled the emotional heights which Burke scaled in praising patriotism and its derivation from 'a common dwelling place with its associations, from common memories, traditions, and customs, and from common ways of feeling and thinking which a common language and still more a common literature embodies'.⁶¹ The connection between Burke and Green was obvious to contemporaries, as can be seen from the sympathetic account of Green's thought which was given by John MacCunn in 1910. In his book *Six Radical Thinkers* MacCunn stressed Green's advice to his students to read Burke.⁶² For MacCunn, Green could almost be taken for a conservative rather than a radical on account of his strong religious instincts, his respect for his predecessors, and his 'reverent appreciation of existing social and political institutions'. What marked him off from conservatism was his 'passion for the ideal' and 'rational faith in the future'.⁶³ Yet there was no inconsistency here for MacCunn; Green's writings prompted the reflection that 'it is entirely possible for a philosophy to be radical without ceasing to be conservative'.⁶⁴

MacCunn evidently found the crucial link between Green's radicalism and his conservatism in his keen sensitivity to patriotic impulses. MacCunn was a fervent disciple of Mazzini, whose democratic and humanitarian nationalism Green himself had imbibed in his youth.⁶⁵ Certainly, he saw Green's writings on the English Civil War as the key to understanding the liberal-conservative tone of his

⁶⁰ Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, 208. A. Simhony has helpfully suggested that the majority of British Idealists upheld a notion of 'relational organicism' rather than 'holistic organicism'. As she argues, these thinkers believed that 'the social good is . . . neither separate from, nor more valuable than, the well-being of individuals'. She is not entirely convinced that Bosanquet may be included in this analysis of British Idealism. 'Idealist organicism: Beyond Holism and Individualism', *History of Political Thought*, 12, 3 (1991), 533.

⁶¹ Green, *Political Obligation*, 1931 edition, 130. On the 'national exclusiveness' of English liberalism since Green, see P. Rich, 'T.H. Green, Lord Scarman, and the issue of ethnic minority rights in English liberal thought,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 10 (April 1987), 149-68. Rich's thesis fails to stand up to the strong element of cosmopolitanism in English liberalism, even state-centred varieties such as Idealism. Certainly, this study emphasises the ecumenical dimension in Barker's liberalism. ⁶² MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, 229.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 237. ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 223. ⁶⁵ Richter, *The Politics of Conscience*, 81.

Idealism, an emphasis which was indeed well placed. In his 'Four lectures on the English Revolution' (1867) Green had lavishly praised the Protectorate established by Cromwell, revealing his identification with the Puritanism with which he had strong ancestral connections.⁶⁶ He regarded Cromwell as a man of great honour who had been confronted with an insuperable task: that of overcoming the factionalism and fanaticism of the burgeoning Nonconformist sects, while at the same time preserving them from encroaching 'ancient interests', specifically those of Laud's Anglican sacerdotalism. Reinforcing the rehabilitation of Cromwell during the second half of the nineteenth century,⁶⁷ Green highlighted his 'genuine and persistent effort' to govern constitutionally, as reflected in the 'instrument of government' which he issued following the dissolution of the Rump parliament. Green was particularly impressed by English Independency, of which he saw Cromwell as a close sympathiser; and he much revered the leader of the Independents, Sir Henry Vane. It was from Vane that he derived the ideal of 'religious citizenship' which he pressed upon late-Victorian England. Vane – and Cromwell – he felt, had achieved that rare combination of beliefs in liberty of individual conscience, on the one hand, and the needs of civil life, on the other. There was no parallel to this delicate balance between the 'inward' and 'outward' life elsewhere in Europe following the Reformation; religion either succumbed to Jesuit destruction of the political fabric of nations, as in Spain, southern Germany, or France, or princely control, as in northern Germany.⁶⁸ A revealing comment by MacCunn as to why this should have been so for Green is that the latter distinguished his heroes from the majority of Puritans by their respect for the 'traditions, the habits, the common feelings and interests, even the prejudices which stood rooted in the national character'.⁶⁹ It was something of a gloss, reflecting MacCunn's own passionate devotion to Burke, but the remark nonetheless captures the high premium which Green placed upon historical continuity and national unity as hallmarks of Englishness. One way of interpreting this stance is to follow the suggestion made earlier that Idealism injected a conciliatory tone into interpretations of Nonconformist political thought at the end of the nineteenth century. This has been singularly absent

⁶⁶ Ibid., 40. ⁶⁷ On this see Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism*, 140–53.

⁶⁸ T.H. Green, 'Four lectures on the English Revolution' (1867), in *The Works of T.H. Green*, ed. R.L. Nettleship (3 vols., London, 1889) vol. III, 282, 284.

⁶⁹ MacCunn. *Six Radical Thinkers*, 222.

previously, as Matthew Arnold's searing attack on Nonconformity in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) makes clear.

So while for Green the Commonwealth may have failed in the short term, subsequently it left a more enduring legacy as the 'great spring of political life in England'. Central to this legacy were the dissenting bodies, whose 'vigorous growth' had been secured by Cromwell's sword.⁷⁰ For Green, they represented the cornerstone of spiritual and political freedom in England, a new variation on an old Whig theme that dovetailed with a growing interest in the role which voluntary societies had played in English national development.⁷¹

Bosanquet's ideas on the centrality of national character also possessed a familiar Burkean ring. This is apparent in his notion of the social mind which underlay all human institutions, rules, and culture. He was at pains to point out that responsibility for these achievements could not be attributed to particular individuals; the products of civilisation belonged 'to the unconscious reason and providence of nature rather than the definite foresight of man'.⁷² As Parker has aptly commented, the examples which Bosanquet brought to bear to illustrate this point formed a 'delightfully Victorian, even Whiggish selection', including as they did 'the British Constitution, the unity of Italy, the science or philosophy of the nineteenth century, and the English language and its literature'.⁷³ The same conclusion about the immersion of Bosanquet's Idealism in English thought and experience is drawn by Nicholson. He argues that Bosanquet did more than explain Hegel to the English; rather he gave Hegelian ideas a concerted English application. Hegel had emphasised the inadequacies in Rousseau's theory of the General Will, specifically the way in which Rousseau had tied its expression to voting rather than *Sittlichkeit*, the values and beliefs of a society implicit in all its varied institutions, not simply those of government.⁷⁴ Bosanquet found the most mature example of this essentially pluralist picture of civil society of England, with its deep-rooted experience of self-government and voluntary organisation. Answering the charge from abroad that the English mind was fundamentally deficient in logic, he argued

⁷⁰ Green, 'Four lectures on the English Revolution', 364.

⁷¹ This will be explored in ch. 3 below.

⁷² B. Bosanquet, 'Old problems under new names', in *The Civilisation of Christendom and Other Studies* (London, 1893), 112-13. Quoted in Parker, 'Bosanquet, historical knowledge, and the history of ideas', 215.

⁷³ Parker, 'Bosanquet, historical knowledge, and the history of ideas', 215.

⁷⁴ Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, 204 and 218.

passionately that 'there is not, and never has been, a national mind more highly endowed than the English'. The English people unquestionably excelled in 'concrete logic, the creative spirit of things'; hence their two main strengths of poetry and politics. What better example of English practical logic than 'the great organised institutions which have sprung unaided from the brain of our wage-earning class'.⁷⁵

Thus, the English Idealists were as much attuned to the force of national character and tradition in historical development, particularly that of their own country, as the Whig historians and their successors. Of course, they recognised other loyalties and identities as well as that of the nation, and they were by no means devotees of all nationalist causes.⁷⁶ In particular, the ideal of internationalism engaged their interest as much as that of nationalism, as will be seen in chapter 4 below. But the support which the idea of national character elicited among Idealist thinkers, and the way in which it veiled a more specific absorption in the traits of the English nation is a significant one. Moreover, the hold of this idea upon the Idealist imagination grew especially strong after the generation of Green and Bosanquet. This can be seen in two works which emerged in the 1920s. Both J.S. Mackenzie's *Arrows of Desire: Essays on our National Character and Outlook* and Barker's *National Character and the Factors in its Formation* represented a late crop of Idealist reflections upon the nature of Englishness.⁷⁷ Furthermore, while the Idealism of Green and Bosanquet purported to treat the *idea* of the state in general, it was often constructed around some resonant images of English society and history, together with associated cultural values. Here too, Idealism seemed to dovetail with Whiggism in the importance which its adherents attached to democracy, political order, constitutionalism, and a high capacity for political organisation as the core of English

⁷⁵ B. Bosanquet, 'The teaching of patriotism' (1911), in *Social and International Ideals: Being Studies in Patriotism* (London, 1917), 18–19. See also his 'The English people: Notes on national characteristics', *International Monthly*, 3 (1901), 71–116. The Pluralist strain of Bosanquet's thought will be further examined in ch. 3 below.

⁷⁶ This point is well argued by John R. Gibbins in his 'Liberalism, Nationalism and the English Idealists', *History of European Ideas*, 15 (1992), 491–7.

⁷⁷ J.S. Mackenzie, *Arrows of Desire: Essays on our National Character and Outlook* (London, 1920). Mackenzie admitted in the preface that some aspects of the subject he addressed were 'not specially within the writer's province'. (He was Professor of Logic and Philosophy at University College Cardiff.) His dedication to his task in the absence of 'a more intimate knowledge of history and literature, of anthropology and social conditions' indicates the importance he attached to the subject, particularly in the aftermath of war. On Barker's *National Character and the Factors in its Formation* (London, 1927), see below ch. 5.

national identity. Finally, the Idealists were by no means averse to according England a unique place in the unfolding of human Reason as a result of these accomplishments. This conception of England as an elect nation is best illustrated in a lay sermon by Edward Caird – his Scottishness notwithstanding – at Balliol College in 1898. There he asserted ‘our claim’ to be ‘a *chosen people*, with a special part to play in the great work of civilisation and of Christianity’. A passage which followed is worth quoting at length for its fine Whiggish (and again, Pluralist) intonations:

it was in this country . . . that the great movement towards political freedom was first initiated; indeed, it was carried to a considerable point of advance, when it had hardly begun in any other country . . . [T]here was from an early time at once greater liberty for individuals and a more ready reaction of the opinions of the people upon government. At the same time, with this freedom of the individual and as the complement of it, there has gone a great facility of association . . . It is perhaps not too much to say that this country first showed to the modern world the immense power that lies in the associated action of free citizens, and proved that its greater vitality, its combination of subordination with independent initiative, makes it more than a match for the mechanical drill of despotism.⁷⁸

It can be seen, then, that at least at the historiographical and cultural levels explored above, Barker’s dual intellectual heritage was mutually reinforcing, lending a certain consistency to his work from the start.⁷⁹ Indeed, much of his *oeuvre* served to strengthen the Whiggish tone which Idealism had already acquired in England, and to strengthen Whiggism at the same time. The net effect of Barker’s writings was to retain the close contact between ideal and reality upon which his philosophical mentors – particularly Green – had insisted. For Barker the ideal was not laid up in another world, as the keener exponents of Idealism such as Plato and Carlyle had claimed, but pervaded existing institutions and activities, particularly English ones. This by no means sanctioned political quiescence. While Green and Bosanquet framed their maxims for state intervention in negative terms – those of ‘hindering hindrances’ and ‘removing obstacles’ to moral freedom – this nonetheless registered the need for at least some growth of legislative activity. It was a formula for state-sponsored

⁷⁸ E. Caird, ‘The nation as an ethical ideal’ (1898), *Lay Sermons and Addresses Delivered in the Hall of Balliol College, Oxford* (Glasgow, 1907), 112–13.

⁷⁹ This will become further apparent in ch. 3 below, in a discussion of the meeting-point of Whiggism and Idealism in Pluralist political theory.

social reform with which Barker had little difficulty, seeming – as it did – to indicate the path of cautious, piecemeal change that he found so congenial in Burke's political thought. In the next chapter we will see the two deposits of intellectual capital from which he worked coming together on this point, while beginning to fracture at another level: the nature of the state.